

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 4th MARCH 2026** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council (until 3.45 p.m.)

Councillor S Vile

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mr B Cooke

National Trust

Mr D Skinner

Planet Purbeck

Mr L Luke

Planet Purbeck

Mr J Griffen

Sustainable Swanage

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Also in attendance: -

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Mr M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

Mr A Young

Purbeck Energy Group

There was one member of the public and one member of the press present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised during Public Participation Time.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Ms J Owens (Sustainable Swanage), Ms K Black (Durlston Country Park), Mr T Clarke (National Trust) and Mr D Pratten (Beach Buddies).

2) Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

3) Matters arising from the Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 12th February 2025

No matters were raised on this occasion.

4) Environment Action Plan – Progress Update

Further to Minute No. 5 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 8th October 2025, Members noted the contents of the Environment Action Plan. The Visitor Services and Business Development Manager (VSBDM) reported that works

on Priority Action 4 within the Environment Action Plan, to develop an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and increase the provision of charging facilities in Swanage Town Council car parks was ongoing and further meetings were scheduled for March 2026 between officers and Dorset Council, to deliver the Charging Ahead scheme. It was noted that a progress report will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

5) Swanage Town Council's Energy Footprint – To receive 2025 report.

The VSBDM presented the Energy Footprint Report for 2025, which detailed energy use, water use, and waste generated by the Town Council over a 12-month period. An alternative approach to measuring the Carbon Footprint was implemented for the 2025 report using conversion factors provided by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero instead of those provided by Low Carbon Dorset. It was reported that due to the change in approach, Carbon Footprint comparisons with previous years were not currently possible. However, actual usage data indicated that there had been a reduction in the Council's energy use and it was the lowest recorded since reporting began in 2022.

It was further reported that the Council took delivery of an additional electric vehicle at the beginning of 2025, replacing one of the aging diesel vehicles and that solar panels (PV) installed at Beach Gardens and the Operations Depot had generated over 29,000kWh across the year, providing electricity for those sites and feeding surplus energy generated back into the grid.

Members noted the contents of the report. In doing so it was acknowledged that the favourable weather in 2025 would have resulted in less energy used for heating and would have resulted in lower fuel consumption from grounds maintenance activities due to the reduced grass and hedge growth compared to previous years.

6) Swanage Information Centre – Air source heat pump feasibility study

Members noted the contents of a briefing paper produced by the Assets and Compliance Manager which detailed the gas boiler system currently installed at Swanage Information Centre and some of the recent problems experienced with both the boiler and the radiators. Several options for replacement were being explored, including the installation of a new more efficient combi-boiler or the potential for the installation of an air source heat pump system which would contribute to the goal of achieving the Council's net zero 2030 target.

An expression of interest had been submitted to Low Carbon Dorset to ascertain if there was funded support available to investigate the feasibility of replacing the boiler with an air source heat pump. The submission had received a positive response and Low Carbon Dorset had awarded up to two days of free technical advice to generate a feasibility assessment, the results of which will be reported to the next meeting of this committee.

7) Consideration of Net Zero 2030 target

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, the VSBDM presented a briefing paper detailing the Carbon Neutral target and the actions included within the Environment Action Plan to help achieve this. It was reported that in 2025 the carbon footprint was 39.1 tonnes of CO₂ compared to the carbon footprint of circa 100 tonnes of CO₂ in 2022. This had been achieved with several initiatives which included:

- Increasing the number of electric vehicles and reducing the reliance on Diesel (currently 4 out of 7 vehicles)
- Sourcing energy from 100% renewable energy suppliers
- Solar (PV) panels on Depot and Beach Gardens with additional battery storage system implemented at Beach Gardens
- Insulation in Swanage Information Centre and Town Hall

- LED lights throughout the estate

It was reported that further reductions in the Carbon Footprint could be realistically achieved. Investigations were ongoing into the feasibility of installing an air source heat pump within the Swanage Information Centre and the utilisation of a Building Management System within the Town Hall. The results of these investigations would be presented at a future meeting of this committee.

Members noted the contents of the report and considered the formation of a working party to further discuss the feasibility of the net zero 2030 target and identify any additional actions that could be implemented. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To form a task & finish group consisting of councillors and outside representatives with specialised knowledge to review the Council net zero 2030 target and identify any actions that can be implemented to further reduce the carbon footprint, with the results being presented to the Autumn 2026 meeting of this committee.

8) **Sustainable Swanage - Update**

The representative of Sustainable Swanage provided an update on recent activities which included a workshop in January 2026 to consider the groups forward strategy and how to achieve this vision. It was reported that as more initiatives were launched, to assist the Council in delivering the Environmental Action Plan, a lot more co-ordination has been required, with a growing number of projects and volunteers. It was further reported that Sustainable Swanage had identified the need to establish three volunteer groups:

- Community Marine Group
- Waste and Recycling Group
- Community Active Travel Group

Members considered the contents of a proposal received from Sustainable Swanage requesting a contribution from unallocated funds within the 2025/26 environmental budget to facilitate the appointment of a temporary Volunteer Co-ordinator. It was further requested that consideration be given to allocating funds from the 2026/27 budget, to enable the Volunteer Co-ordinator to provide ongoing support to the newly formed groups. The primary responsibility of the Volunteer Co-ordinator would be to identify local stakeholders and establish the three groups, ensuring they are able to function effectively with a defined purpose and governance structure. The Volunteer Co-ordinator would be employed by Planet Purbeck but report to the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager. The temporary contract would be for 14 days in March 2026 to facilitate the establishing of the groups and a further three days in the future to progress the sustainable tourism vision. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That unallocated funds within the 2025/26 Environmental budget be re-allocated to the contracting of a temporary Volunteer Co-ordinator for 14 days, through Planet Purbeck, to aid in the establishment of the volunteer groups.

It was further agreed that the potential for the volunteer co-ordinator to provide resource for the development of a sustainable tourism vision should be considered by the Tourism and Local Economy Committee.

9) **Swanage Streams Partnership update**

The representative for Planet Purbeck gave a presentation on recent actions which included involvement with several projects in the surrounding area, improving ditches and installing log breaks to help adjust the flow of surface water during periods of heavy rainfall and the speed with which it reaches the water courses. Work to identify opportunities to advise and assist with the implementation of flood management improvements were actively being sought and via engagement with the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and large estate owners in Purbeck.

It was noted that public engagement continued to receive strong support and practical activities had continued with the assistance of volunteers and National Trust staff, including fly monitoring surveys, River Morphology surveys and the establishment of a Storm Photo Patrol group.

An update was also provided on forthcoming activities which included:

- Investigating the possibility of a collaboration with Dorset Wildlife Trust to set up a Water Guardians scheme.
- Working with volunteers to conduct further River Fly surveys in Swan Brook
- Exploring potential opportunities to expand the scope of areas covered by Swanage Streams Partnership to include Durlston Stream.
- Planned walks of Ulwell Stream.

10) **Herston Community Field Engagement – Update from Planet Purbeck**

Further to Minute No. 11 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 8th October 2025, the representative for Planet Purbeck provided an update on the progress of the Herston Community Field Engagement. Members noted the update provided and considered the contents of a proposal received from Planet Purbeck, detailing the public engagement consultation events planned to be carried out in March and April 2026, with a final report to be submitted by the end of April 2026. The results contained within this report would be presented to the next meeting of the Environment Committee.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To approve the proposed actions as detailed within the Planet Purbeck consultation plan for Herston Community Field, with a final report to be provided to Council by 30th April 2026.

11) **Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 - Action plan update**

Further to Minute No. 13 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 8th October 2025, Members considered a report, produced by the Assets & Compliance Manager detailing the progress to date of the Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 Action Plan which included:

- 105 trees obtained from Dorset Wildlife Trust and 43 trees purchased by the Council had been planted, 90 new shrubs had been planted, and hazel hedging has been procured for Godlingston Cemetery.
- The match funding application submitted to Dorset Community Tree Fund towards additional tree, plant and wildlife information boards was successful and the new signage had been installed at Day's Park. Plans were being developed for additional information signage in other greenspace locations.
- Exploring the potential to enter Godlingston Cemetery for consideration for the Cemetery of the Year award.

It was further reported that the Council had launched an initiative to tackle dog waste and litter, one of the most critical issues for residents as identified in the recent public greenspace consultation. Councillors will attend local primary schools to engage children, aged 5-12, to design a poster encouraging people to use the litter bins and pick up dog waste. Some of these designs would be turned into permanent signage that would be placed in local greenspaces. Members considered whether this signage could also be used in residential areas and locations that have a high volume of foot traffic to further increase public awareness.

Members noted the progress to date and the proposed new additions to the Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 Action Plan, to develop a nature corridor in Journeys End and to develop a Swanage Town Council Tree Warden scheme.

12) Consideration of proposed seaweed management project

The VSBDM presented a proposal received from Lantern Consulting, a local marine sector consulting company, offering to conduct a free seaweed management project. The project would look at the current seaweed management plan implemented by Swanage Town Council, the costs involved, and would engage with stakeholders and the current contractors carrying out associated activities. In addition to this, the project would explore other methods of seaweed management to identify if a more effective, sustainable and cost-effective approach may be suitable for Swanage. A report of findings would be brought to the next meeting of this committee. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To accept the proposal for a free consultation and report of findings, regarding seaweed management and disposal activities undertaken on Swanage beach.

13) Environmental Budgets

Further to Minute No. 14 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 8th October 2025, the VSBDM provided an update on the Environmental Community Engagement budget approved for the 2025/26 financial period of £20,000. It was reported that the current forecast indicated that £13,650 of the budget would be utilised by the end of the 2025/26 financial period. It was further reported that a budget allocation of £15,000 had been approved for the 2026/27 financial period. This figure included allocations for supporting:

- Sustainable Swanage in the provision of a bi-monthly programme of public information and educational meetings
- Swanage Streams Partnership public engagement activities (subject to project proposal and approval by this committee at a future meeting)
- The implementation of the Council Greenspaces Strategy, Neighbourhood Plan and Environment Action Plan
- Public engagement projects.

Members noted the contents of the report and the forecast spend for the 2025/26 financial year.

14) Waste Management

a) Update on activities from Beach Buddies

An update was provided by the Chairman on behalf of Beach Buddies which reported that in 2025, there have been a total of 50 beach cleans carried out with a total removal of 960kg of litter and debris. It was also reported that in 2026, there have been a total of 9 beach cleans carried out so far with a total removal of 230kg of litter and debris, much of which was brought ashore during the recent storms.

b) Update on activities from Swanage Landers

The Committee offered thanks and recognition to Frank Roberts for his leadership in establishing and sustaining the Swanage Landers which is currently approaching their 10-year anniversary in July 2026. During that time, the Swanage Landers have made a clear and practical contribution to the town by regularly volunteering to clean rubbish from local roads and public areas. The Chairman noted that their work reflects a strong sense of community responsibility and pride, with Frank's commitment playing a key role in their continued success.

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on their activities. It was reported that, although they had not formally met for four years, Swanage Landers was re-forming and in 2026, a team of 5 people have already removed a total of 75kg of litter and debris. It is anticipated that towards the end of spring 2026, their road cleaning activities would have covered over 50 miles of the roads in and around Purbeck. Additionally, they had continued to provide encouragement and support to volunteers to conduct activities independently. Some of the heavier work had continued to be carried out using the Mechanical Road Sweeper (MRS) with the support of the Town Council's Operations Department.

c) Dorset Council Waste Services Update

The VSBDM presented an update from Dorset Council Waste Services stating that at present they were still seeking additional cover to provide waste collection services post 2.30pm on weekdays in the summer season. It was further reported that a proposal for Council to procure the services of a Seasonal Waste Operative will be presented to the Personnel Committee on 22nd April 2026. Members noted the information provided in the update and briefly considered potential actions that could be implemented to ensure waste collection for the summer service would be maintained at a sufficient level.

15) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

No matters were raised on this occasion.

16) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting had been provisionally scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 24th July 2026.

The Meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.
